

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I too am responding to Raised Bill SB 175. The first problem is your reasons for these proposals. They are not clear. So, we are left to infer why you seek these particular changes. What we infer is not good.

The first and largest problem is that this bill is not in the spirit of what came out of the ESSA. The federal message was for state's to start over and do a COMPLETE rethink of educational standards, testing, and teacher evaluations. I add to that the issue of student data privacy, which you have still failed to address. As one of 10 states with no statutes protecting from abuses of privacy, you should be ashamed of yourselves. It is a national embarrassment that you can't fashion a set of laws to protect the information of students and their families. Absolutely shameful.

Instead all you seem to be able to do is make sure you conform to illegal/unconstitutional federal dictats (that's right, dictats). So, the very mindset for this bill is what is wrong. The language in the bill is just a derivative, a precipitate of that mindset.

I see power grabs, money grabs, attempts at greater control and centralization in a state that has one of longest traditions of local control in public education, but also one of the most persistent attempts to take it away. Also note, you define some terms, but not others. What kind of a bill is that?

Parental Rights - There is no direct language, but there is clearly implied language related to the 95% rule, which will serve to interfere with and punish parents who exercise their constitutional right to protect their children and decide what education is appropriate and what education is not appropriate for them.

This obviously includes what has become a witch's brew of rules, modifications, adjustments, compromises, and "innovations" relating to the related issues of standardized testing and the "mastery test" the state requires for graduation. What a mess. If I were given the authority to handle this there are at least three things I would start with: 1) Exit Connecticut from the disastrous SBAC test - the CEA is absolutely right about this illegitimate monstrosity of a test, 2) Keep the SAT as a college entrance exam (and reject the new version from the College Board - more colleges are rejecting it too), and 3) Restore CAPT and CMT as THE standardized tests, as well as the mastery exam. -- Also, remember that, pre-common core, Connecticut beat out 60 nation's in the last international test in 2012.

The CT Dept. of Education has tried to have its cake and eat it too when it comes to the CMT and CAPT. You can't criticize them on the one hand, but then proudly proclaim how the SBAC is based on them. Frankly, it's demented. The CMT and CAPT have a long, well established history. They are very helpful to parents (I certainly found them helpful). For some reasons, education administrators have trouble recognizing when they have something really good. They are too easily misled by phony arguments from so-called experts such as for SBAC.

The education commissioner's office is not the Office Of Graduation Micro-Management. The commissioner has no business issuing diplomas, nor should the commissioner be the sole authority, from what can be determined by the (intentionally) vague language of this bill.

Line 75 - "Accountability Index" - The cradle to job (and beyond) collection of data is clearly finding one home in this concept of an "Accountability Index". I can imagine that the education bureaucrats feel this is a more effective tool for decision making. I offer it becomes a more intrusive tool. It also suggests a certain amount of mental thrashing around on their part if they can't identify the essential set of information they need to make key decisions. This index becomes the basis for even more outrageous overreach on their parts. The key phrase is "...may include, but need not be limited to..." This just shows they are throwing spaghetti against the wall and have no idea of what they are really doing. Rest assured, this is a Big Data monster which will consume everything.

Line 87 - "Mastery test data of record"...The suggestion to use the SAT as a mastery test shows the commissioner and others have all lost all sense and perspective on what defines "mastery" of academic material. Combined with the other disaster, common core, they are cobbling together a Frankenstein

system of educational evaluation. A college entrance exam does not constitute "mastery". As you know, they serve two completely different purposes, yet they ignore this fact. That form of thinking is so poorly considered, I don't even know where to begin.

Parent University - I had to look this up, since you don't explain it. It seems like a good idea. More of that is needed.

Folks, I have much more to say - but the message is clear. This bill is so poorly thought out, ignores so many problems, violates so many rights, and is so utterly bereft of true thought and reflection on improving public education in Connecticut, that this voting taxpayer American citizen says..."Throw this out, and go back to the drawing board." Show at least SOME consideration for parent's concerns, for God's sake.

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